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Slaughter Applauds Creation of Committee on Global Warming

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Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Rules Committee, today applauded the impending creation of the bi-partisan Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming in the House of Representatives.

The Committee was authorized by the Rules Committee as part of the more general Committee Funding Resolution it passed yesterday. That resolution will fund the operations of all House Committees.

"For decades, evidence has mounted that our planet's temperature is

increasing," Rep. Slaughter said. "President Bush even used the phrase 'climate change' in his State of the Union Address this year."

"But efforts to break the link in the public imagination between human activity and climate change are still ongoing. Doubt is still being seeded in the public mind. Despite the President's recent admission, his Administration has also been accused of rewriting sections of impartial federal scientific reports that tie human activity to global warming.

"My colleagues and I on the Democratic side of the aisle do not share this degree of doubt. Nor do we seek to disseminate it. We have been convinced - as have people the world over - by the overwhelming weight of available impartial, scientific evidence. We have been convinced of a simple idea: that human beings are altering our planet's environment.

"We have committed ourselves to being the party of personal environmental responsibility. We have pledged to confront this great challenge before it is beyond our grasp, beyond our ability to change even if we wanted to. We have promised a strong path of action - and this bill represents the first steps along that path taken by this Congress in years."

The complete text of Rep. Slaughter's remarks, as prepared, are included below:

M. Speaker, the rule before us will allow for the consideration of a bi-partisan Committee Funding Resolution. It was reported out of the House Administration Committee with the support of both Chairwoman Millender-McDonald and Ranking Member Ehlers.

I want to take a moment to say how pleased I am of the way in which this bill embodies the spirit of fiscal responsibility that is so often advocated by this body.

The financial pressures on our government are immense. Recent years have left us with unprecedented amounts of foreign debt. At the same time, my fellow Democrats and I are struggling to ensure the safety of tens and hundreds of thousands of troops abroad while refusing to short-change vital domestic programs here at home.

This resolution reflects that reality. While not all committees have received the budget increases they hoped for, this funding resolution provides a bi-partisan approach to ensuring that they can fulfill their duties and obligations without asking Congress to spend money we don't have. It includes only a 2.4 percent increase in funding from last year - one of the smallest increases in Committee funding in the last 12 years.

As vital as it is to start bringing some fiscal sanity back to Washington, there is another reason why this legislation is significant.

As a result of the actions taken by the Rules Committee yesterday, it now contains a provision that represents a profound departure from the approach recent Republican Congresses have taken toward one of the most pivotal issues of our time: global warming.

Global warming is not merely an environmental issue. It is also a social issue, and an economic one. It affects all nations, and all peoples. And its consequences, if left unchecked, could produce truly dramatic changes to human societies the world over.

For decades, evidence has mounted that our planet's temperature is increasing. That evidence has become so universally recognized that it is no longer in dispute.

President Bush even used the phrase "climate change" in his State of the Union Address this year.

But the question that is raised today by some is a different one: Is global warming caused by human activity? Or is it merely a natural phenomenon akin to the last Ice Age - something we have to adapt to, but that we cannot effect?

Efforts to break the link in the public imagination between human activity and climate change are still ongoing. Doubt is still being seeded in the public mind.

Sometimes these efforts are blunt. Despite the President's recent admission, his Administration has also been accused of rewriting sections of impartial federal scientific reports that tie human activity to global warming.

Other times, the efforts are more subtle. We hear all the time Members of this body express their desire to, as they put it, get to the bottom of the problem of climate change so that we may come to understand its true cause.

M. Speaker, my colleagues and I on the Democratic side of the aisle do not share this degree of doubt. Nor do we seek to disseminate it.

We have been convinced by numerous internationally recognized scientific studies, by years of careful analysis and by endless measurements taken around the world.

We have been convinced - as have people the world over - by the overwhelming weight of available impartial, scientific evidence. We have been convinced of a simple idea: that human beings are altering our planet's environment.

And as such, we have committed ourselves to being the party of personal environmental responsibility. We have pledged to confront this great challenge before it is beyond our grasp, beyond our ability to change even if we wanted to.

We have promised a strong path of action - and this bill represents the first steps along that path taken by this Congress in years.

This resolution will create a fully-funded Select Committee whose sole purpose will be to focus on global warming.

The Committee will have 15 members, 9 from the Majority and 6 from the Minority. It will serve as a much-needed Congressional forum for hearings, investigation, and discussion, and will have the chance to make recommendations concerning climate change.

Simply put, people the world over can breathe easier, because this resolution will institutionalize the commitment of the House of Representatives to confronting global warming.

M. Speaker, I also want to take a moment to address one of the criticisms of this rule that is likely to be voiced by the Minority.

We may be told that a hearing and mark-up process for the Select Committee did not take place before this Rule was authored.

But a question like this one - the question of whether or not we should address global warming - has had an ongoing public hearing for a generation. Numerous arguments on both sides of that question have been made.

And at the end of it all, the overwhelming censuses, both among the public and among internationally recognized climate scientists, is that global warming is real, it is human-influenced, and it is our responsibility to control.

The creation of this Select Committee is a response to that international public hearing. Democrats have called for the need to fight climate change for years. Today, we have the chance to turn that call into action - and we don't intend to waste it.

M. Speaker, we cannot forget that in 1997, the Republican-controlled Senate rejected the Kyoto protocol, a path-breaking international effort to curb global warming.

And we must not forget that back in 2001, one of the Administration's first acts of international significance was its dramatic rejection of that same set of principals. It is time for this House to join the vast majority of the world community that recognizes the threat global warming poses, and the role our nation plays in it.

It is time for us to be leaders on this issue, and to take responsibility for our actions. I urge the passage of this rule and of this resolution, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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